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Mr Tom Jackson  
Committee Clerk,  
Children and Young People Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Mr Jackson

### **INQUIRY ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN INTO CARE IN WALES**

I note the invitation to submit evidence to the Committee's inquiry into the placement of children into care in Wales. I do not intend to submit detailed evidence but wish to draw the Committee's attention to my study on the Education of Looked After Children that is part of my current programme of value for money examinations for the Audit Committee.

Many children in care in Wales under-achieve at school. The most recent data suggests that in 2007-8 over half of those leaving care aged 16 and over had no GCSE or GNVQ qualifications and there is a significant gap in attainment between children in care and other children at key stages 2 and 3.

This situation is not new and has been a cause of concern for many years. Achieving improvement in the educational outcomes for children in care was an objective of the Children First programme and more recently the looked after children element of the RAISE grant programme. There are also many local initiatives.

My study is addressing the question 'Are the actions being taken enough to improve significantly the educational outcomes for looked after children?' The Welsh Assembly Government, Estyn, CSSIW and other relevant bodies are represented on the reference group for the study and six local councils are contributing by testing a self-assessment process and sharing their practice.

The study will not be focusing on the arrangements for placing children into care but it will cover arrangements for corporate parenting, managing performance, joint working between education and social services, the effectiveness of initiatives and the sharing of good practice. The study team is also collecting the views of looked after children and foster carers which will also contribute to the study.

I intend to hold a 'shared learning seminar' later this year as part of the work of the study. This event will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to hear and assess notable practice from within Wales and elsewhere. I expect to report to the Audit Committee early in 2010.

If you would like further information about the study please let me know or contact Stephen Martin, Project Manager for the study at the address above or email: [Stephen.Martin@wao.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.Martin@wao.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

*Joe Bashford*

**JEREMY COLMAN**  
**AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES**